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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION US-CHINA RELATIONS/TAKESHIMA
DISPUTE (DOKDO) - TOKYO

LEAD STORIES: Most Monday morning papers front-paged the victory of an opposition Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) candidate in Sunday's by-election in Chiba. LDP-backed candidates also lost in key mayoral elections in Iwakuni and Okinawa City, dealing a heavy blow to the ruling coalition.

1. "Bush-Hu Talks: Lingering Skepticism about China as a 'Responsible Stakeholder'" The top-circulation, moderate Yomiuri editorialized (4/22): "President Bush once characterized relations between the US and China as 'positive but complicated.' The summit between Bush and Chinese President Hu Jintao on Thursday demonstrated this to be an accurate description. The focal point of the talks during Hu's first official visit to the US was how Beijing would respond to American concerns about China's rapid rise. At the talks, the two leaders agreed that their countries share 'common strategic interests' and emphasized they are ready to build positive relations.

2. "They were, however, unable to reach a consensus on a number of issues.... With mid-term elections approaching in November, many sectors of US society and Congress as well have voiced fears that China poses an economic and military 'threat.'... Since the second half of last year, US policy on China has been to encourage that country to play the role of a 'responsible stakeholder.'... In the international community, as well, there is an emerging consensus that China should fulfill its responsibility as a major country. China should realize that the 'responsible stakeholder' idea is not just a US position."

3. "Japan, South Korea Avert Takeshima (Dokdo) Crisis Through Dialogue" An editorial in the business daily

Nihon Keizai commented (4/23): "Japan and South Korea agreed Saturday in Seoul to settle the dispute over Japan's planned maritime survey in waters near the disputed Takeshima (Dokdo) islets, where the exclusive economic zones (EEZs) claimed by both countries overlap. The worst-case scenario of a clash at sea was thus averted through vice ministerial talks.... Japan rushed to undertake a maritime survey after concluding that Seoul would strengthen its de facto control of the islets by proposing Korean names for seafloor topography around the islets at an international ocean-mapping conference to be held in June in Germany....

14. "According to the agreement, South Korea will make necessary preparations and propose Korean names for the seafloor features 'at an appropriate time,' and the demarcation of EEZ boundaries will be discussed at senior-working-level talks.... Given that territorial disputes can easily inflame nationalist sentiment, negotiations should be held in a quiet atmosphere between officials who enjoy a relationship of trust.... If Japanese and South Korean officials were indeed able to form bonds of trust at the working-level talks in Seoul, the crisis may have actually improved relations. The future course of events will determine whether this has indeed been the case."

DONOVAN